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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 5068
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5174
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8770
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6342
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1661
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1975
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0509
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4185
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000010

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: FOREIGN MINISTER DISCUSSES GAMBARI, DPRK

REFUGEES, ELECTIONS, GLOBAL FUND

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Classified By: Economic Officer Samantha A. Carl-Yoder for Reasons 1.4
(b and d).

Summary

11. (C) During a January 5 meeting with Burmese Minister of Foreign Affairs Nyan Win, the Charge reiterated the USG's concerns about ongoing human rights abuses in Burma, including the continuing arrests and recent long sentences for political activists. He stressed the importance of dialogue between the GOB and opposition groups and the need for free, fair, and transparent 2010 elections. When asked about any plans for UN SYG Ban or his Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari to visit Burma, the Foreign Minister said planning is under way for a Gambari visit at the end of January. When asked if the UN would be insisting on any conditions for the visit, the Minister said "I am not in a position to tell you." The Charge briefed the Foreign Minister on the USG's position on Burma's proposed Global Fund application. When asked, the Foreign Minister briefly discussed the GOB's recent "soft" deportation of 19 North Korean refugees. End summary.

Concerns about Human Rights

12. (C) During a January 5 meeting with Foreign Minister Nyan Win, the Charge reiterated the USG's strong position on human rights and the need for political reform. The USG continues to take notice of Burma's ongoing arrests and recent mass convictions of political activists. As Burma's 2010 elections loom, the world will be watching to see whether Burma provides free and fair elections, as the

Foreign Minister promised in his 2008 UNGA speech. The Charge noted that for the U.S. "free and fair" would mean transparent elections, with all political actors, including opposition parties and political prisoners, participating. The FM indicated that Burma's political party law is in final draft and should be released soon. The Charge emphasized the importance of dialogue on the political future with opposition groups, including Aung San Suu Kyi, the National League for Democracy (NLD), and the 88 Generation leaders.

13. (C) The FM stated that in the past the GOB invited all parties, including insurgents, to participate in its roadmap process; but the NLD refused to participate. If an organization refuses to work with the government, it will be left behind. Nyan Win said the GOB remains willing to work with the NLD, should the NLD want to participate in the political process.

14. (C) Nyan Win argued that Burma's political situation is an internal issue, one that should not concern the world. He raised Israel's recent actions in Gaza, claiming the world should focus on that international crisis with human rights implications. Charge noted that human rights issues in Burma, while different from those in Gaza, are international concerns fully deserving international attention.

Possible Gambari Visit in January

15. (C) When asked about any discussions regarding possible UN SYG or Gambari visits to Burma, Nyan Win informed the Charge that the GOB has invited Gambari to visit in late January, and Gambari has accepted. MOFA has no details yet of Gambari's program, but the Burmese Permanent

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Representative in New York would meet with Gambari's staff early this week to discuss the particulars. The Charge inquired whether the UN has imposed any conditions on such a visit. Nyan Win replied, "I am not in a position to tell you." Asked about the SYG, Nyan Win only noted that the ASEAN summit has been postponed to spring.

Clarifying USG Position on Global Fund, Visas

16. (C) The Charge briefed Nyan Win on the USG's position regarding Burma's expected Round 9 Global Fund application, explaining that the U.S. would be supportive of a Global Fund (GF) program if Burma's application adequately addresses the problems that led to the Global Fund's 2005 withdrawal. The FM, pleased to hear the US position, stated he would recommend that the Ministry of Health (MOH) move forward with its application. The Charge noted that site access is an issue. He urged MOFA to work closely with the MOH to ensure that GF-related visas are issued quickly. He noted the success of the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) mechanism in securing visas for post-cyclone relief efforts and inquired whether this could serve as a model for Global Fund visa issuance. Nyan Win responded that his Ministry issues visas for health-related projects at the recommendation of the MOH; he expected no delays but pledged to work with the Ministry of Health on this issue.

17. (C) The Charge expressed appreciation for recent improvement in MOFA's assistance with USG visa requests, while noting that issues remain, particularly for teachers at the International School of Yangon (ISY) and incoming Embassy staff. He noted the Embassy will continue to provide MOFA with information and explanations for why visas should be issued, and asked that the Ministry issue visas for Embassy staff expeditiously.

"Soft" Deportation of 19 DPRK Refugees

18. (C) The Charge noted Washington interest in press reports that Burma authorities recently released 19 North Korean refugees to Thailand. The FM explained that Burma's official policy is to deport anyone who enters Burma without a visa. He believed that these DPRK refugees intended to go to Thailand and landed in Burma by mistake. The GOB, in this instance, decided to return the 19 DPRK refugees to their original entry point on the Mekong River. From there, they presumably floated down river and entered into Thailand. (Note: The South Korean Ambassador to Burma informed us that when MFA attempted to contact the DPRK embassy about the case, the North Koreans did not respond, presumably because they see such "refugees" as traitors and because the DPRK embassy has no money to pay for return tickets. When the South Koreans attempted to gain consular access and to consult about the case, MFA rebuffed them.)

Comment

19. (C) The entire meeting was in a conversational tone, even the discussion of thorny human-rights and democracy issues. Plans for a Gambari visit at the end of January are news to us. The FM's evasive reply to the question about conditions suggests the UN has demanded something. We are curious what was asked and what has been promised.
DINGER